

## Gender differences in friendship pattern and relationship to self-esteem among college students

Manish Kumar<sup>1\*</sup>, Anwesha Mondal<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Friendships play an especially important role in the social functioning of a person from childhood till death. Relationship with peers plays a large part in a young person's life even while the family continues to be significant. Friendships offer people with many positive opportunities despite the negative connotations that peer relationships have too. Peer relationships are very important for healthy development and essential for every individual in all spheres of life. **Aim:** The present study aimed to find out the gender differences and their relation to the self-esteem in young adults studying in college. **Materials and Methods:** A cross sectional study has been conducted with 100 students, 50 females and 50 males of different faculties selected from six different colleges of Kolkata, West Bengal. Self-made socio-demographic data sheet, Dimensions of Friendship Scale (DFS) and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale were used for assessment. **Results:** Females and males were found to differ in their friendship pattern, mostly in the domain of Acceptance, Mutual Assistance, Trust, Understanding and Spontaneity. Self-esteem was also found to have a relationship with respect to the friendship among male participants. **Conclusion:** Friendship is an important relationship for both females and males where they give value to every aspect of friendship pattern and is also found to have an effect on their self-esteem.

**Keywords:** Gender, Differences, Friendship, Self-Esteem, College, Students

In every individual's life, friends and friendships play an increasingly and one of the most important roles. One of the essential components of development is friendship which provides areas where one can explore their identities, where they can feel accepted, feel safe to talk about very intimate personal dilemmas, offering emotional support to one another and can develop a sense of belongingness <sup>[1]</sup>. Friendships also allow to practice and foster social skills necessary for future success. In the early years of life people usually develop friendships which, when maintained and continued becomes more intimate, exclusive and more constant throughout life although these close friendships can be developed in later of phases of life also <sup>[2]</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry-A Centre of Excellence, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Institute of Psychiatry-A Centre of Excellence, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

\*Responding Author

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There come changes in friendship throughout life, however, it may also occur during early adulthood as young people become increasingly dependent on their friends and less dependent on their parents for emotional support. At such stance, acceptance of friendship becomes a formidable task for young adults to enjoy better social lives <sup>[3]</sup>. A capacity to form close, intimate friendship during early adulthood is related to overall social, emotional adjustment and competence. Building and maintaining satisfactory friendships is a relevant indicator of mental, physical well-being and an important protective factor throughout the whole life span, particularly in young adults <sup>[4]</sup>. Another study revealed bidirectional relationships between social understanding and friendships during young adulthood <sup>[5]</sup>. Friendships provide a more realistic model for developing skills, attitudes, values, helping others and provide a medium to test their values derived from their parents. Friendships offer emotional security in terms of similarity in thoughts, problems and ideas.

Support, intimacy, and reciprocity with friends helps in maintaining and contributing good psychosocial adjustment <sup>[6]</sup>. More specifically, good quality friendship patterns represent a positive social context strengthening self-confidence, expectations for the future, and social competence <sup>[7]</sup>. Friendship seems to be the relational experience that, through support and social comparison, provides adults with an opportunity to learn new social definitions, to build and strengthen their social capabilities, to experiment with their own identity and different social roles which therefore is a significant variable that mediates emotional independence of all adults.

In this modern era of digitization of technology, the internet gives every person more opportunities to connect, engage with people and thus it becomes more relevant in current scenario, where everybody is busy in their lives, one can keep connected with friends no matter where in the world they are. At the same time forging online friendships and learning new things is also a part of this digital world and social platforms. A digitally connected world helps every person to meet new people and expand their horizons, as well as helping everyone to keep in touch and connected with those. Those new people one meet can grow into online friendships, from them one can find communities and connection, both of which help to build confidence and sense of belonging. But, on the other hand, a connected world also means that one can be exposed to people and groups that might be harmful, offensive or may not have best interests at heart. Along with that, in today's scenario, due to busy lives with jobs and lack of sufficient time, people tend to keep their friendships restricted to online social mediums only, like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter instead of having frequent meetings; many people lose their friendships and contacts due to not able to keep in touch with them regularly.

With respect to friendship pattern, males reported sharper increase over time than females in their perceptions of the quality of their closest, same-sex friendships <sup>[8]</sup>. Another research studied gender differences in the features, processes and outcomes related to friendship <sup>[9]</sup>. They stated that girls share closer bond than boys in friendship. But this does not mean that boys rarely form close friendships. They often do but the quality of friendship is more variable. Boys and girls seem to enter friendships with different social needs because of gender-role expectations, then their friendship nurtures in different ways; girls towards communal concerns, and boys towards achievement and status concerns <sup>[10]</sup>. The presence of competitive striving, which has been found to be more of a characteristic of men than women might be a reason for lesser intimacy among men in terms of friendship <sup>[11]</sup>. Sharing of confidence and emotional support seem to be more vital in female friendship than to male friendship throughout life <sup>[12]</sup>. Male friendships focus less on conversation than on shared

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activity, usually sports and competitive games. Males tend to gain self-concept and self-esteem from competition with friends and girls. The socialization of females often emphasizes relational skills and interpersonal understanding whereas the socialization of males often emphasizes autonomy and individuation<sup>[13]</sup>. Thus it may be suggested that the necessary interpersonal and cognitive skills needed for close and supportive friendship are achieved by females at an earlier age than males.

Two important characteristics of friendship, the first and most important of which is intimacy and the other is seeking psychological closeness and mutual understanding from their friends. Secondly, people want their friends to be loyal to each other. A capacity to form close, intimate friendship during childhood and adolescence period is related to overall social, emotional adjustment and competence. High psycho-socially mature boys are more self-confident, more individualistic; their friendships are more intimate and also show greater empathy towards their parents. On the other hand, psychosocially mature girls express themselves freely, are less self-conscious and focused more on discovering who they are<sup>[14]</sup>.

Another important aspect of adult life is self-esteem, several new dimensions of self-esteem are close friendships, romantic appeal and job competence. Persons rely on parents, teachers and friends for the validation of their self-esteem. Close friends assist each other in exploring options by providing emotional support and role models of identity development<sup>[14]</sup>.

On the other hand, there are instances when problem behaviors can also develop in a person by influence and encouragement from peer relationships specially in childhood and adolescence. Although the negative influence of peers is often overemphasized, more can be done to help teenagers to experience their family and the peer group as mutually constructive environments. To accomplish this, families, communities, religious places, schools, and other youth groups can all contribute together to help them develop positive peer relationships, deflect negative peer pressures and influences<sup>[15]</sup>.

In another study on both the genders, it was found that there was a direct positive effect of support by friends on all the areas like acquisition of autonomy in the organization of leisure time, social-institutional tasks, in terms of school and college success; relational tasks, in terms of constructing relationships with the other gender (dating). The findings showed that conflict with friends is negatively related to academic success and positively related to dating only in the youngest group. Furthermore, support by friends helps to moderate the effect of conflict with peers which in turn helps them to understand their adult social roles<sup>[16]</sup>.

Previous studies indicate that high quality relationships in terms of support, intimacy, and reciprocity with friends and peers in general, encourage the maintenance of contact and contribute to psychosocial adjustment<sup>[17]</sup>. High quality friendships are related to the regulation of emotions<sup>[18]</sup>, social competence<sup>[19]</sup>, problem solving<sup>[20]</sup>, academic success and adjustment<sup>[21]</sup>. Some of the previous research also showed that, in human lives supportive friendships, compared to conflictual relationships, are related to higher levels of psychosocial well-being and lower levels of aggression towards peers. More specifically, friendship patterns characterized by support and sharing of thoughts, feelings, and behavior represent a positive social context where people can strengthen their self-confidence, expectations for the future, and social competence<sup>[22]</sup>. However, during late childhood and

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adolescent period, children and adolescents sometime show mild transgression against adult rules, such as lying and disobedience [23].

In light of the above cited literature, the present study was planned to study the friendship pattern among young adults and analyze the gender differences in the pattern of friendships and also to assess the relationship of friendship patterns with self-esteem of college students.

### MATERIAL & METHODS

A cross sectional study has been conducted among the undergraduate students in the city of Kolkata, West Bengal. A total sample of 100 students, 50 females and 50 males, studying in various disciplines such as science, arts, and commerce were selected through purposive sampling from six different colleges of Kolkata. Approval of ethical committee has been taken before conducting the study.

#### Objectives

The main objective of the study is to assess the gender differences among different dimensions of friendship and its relation with self-esteem in college students.

#### Hypotheses

There will be no significant difference between gender among different dimensions of friendship and will have no relation with self-esteem in college students.

#### Scales

The scales used in the present study were:

1. **Socio-demographic Data Sheet:** A semi structured socio demographic data sheet was prepared for collecting the age, gender, domicile, educational qualification and other details of the sample.
2. **General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12):** This was designed to be a self-administered screening test aimed at detecting psychiatric disorders among general population. This test has been used as a screening tool for the assessment of psychiatric morbidity in normal samples. The Cronbach's alpha for GHQ-12 is 0.82 and principal component analysis yielded three significant components accounting for 62 percent of variance. Each item is scored on four probable answers such as not at all, no more than usual, rather more than usual and much more than usual. Subject has to choose the most suitable one; each positive answer is scored 1. Score ranges from 0 to 12 and 2 is cut-off.
3. **Dimensions of Friendship Scale (DFS):** This scale was developed by Chandna and Chadha (1986) [24] to assess the dimensions of friendship. This scale helps the researchers to study the mental and physical health implications of having and losing close friends. Subjects were asked to respond to items as Yes or No. Items measuring of one particular dimension positively and responded as True or Yes were given a score of one. The negatively worded items were given a score of Zero for the true response and a score of one for a false response. The higher the score, the higher was the subject on that dimension. The scale consists of total 64 items where 37 were positively scored and 27 were negatively scored. The reliability and validity of the scale has already been established. The test-retest reliability was found to be 0.78 and split-half reliability for odd-even items was 0.72, first-second halves was 0.76. The validity of the scale was found to be 0.78. Both the reliabilities and validity has been found to be significant indicating that the scale is highly reliable, consistent and valid.

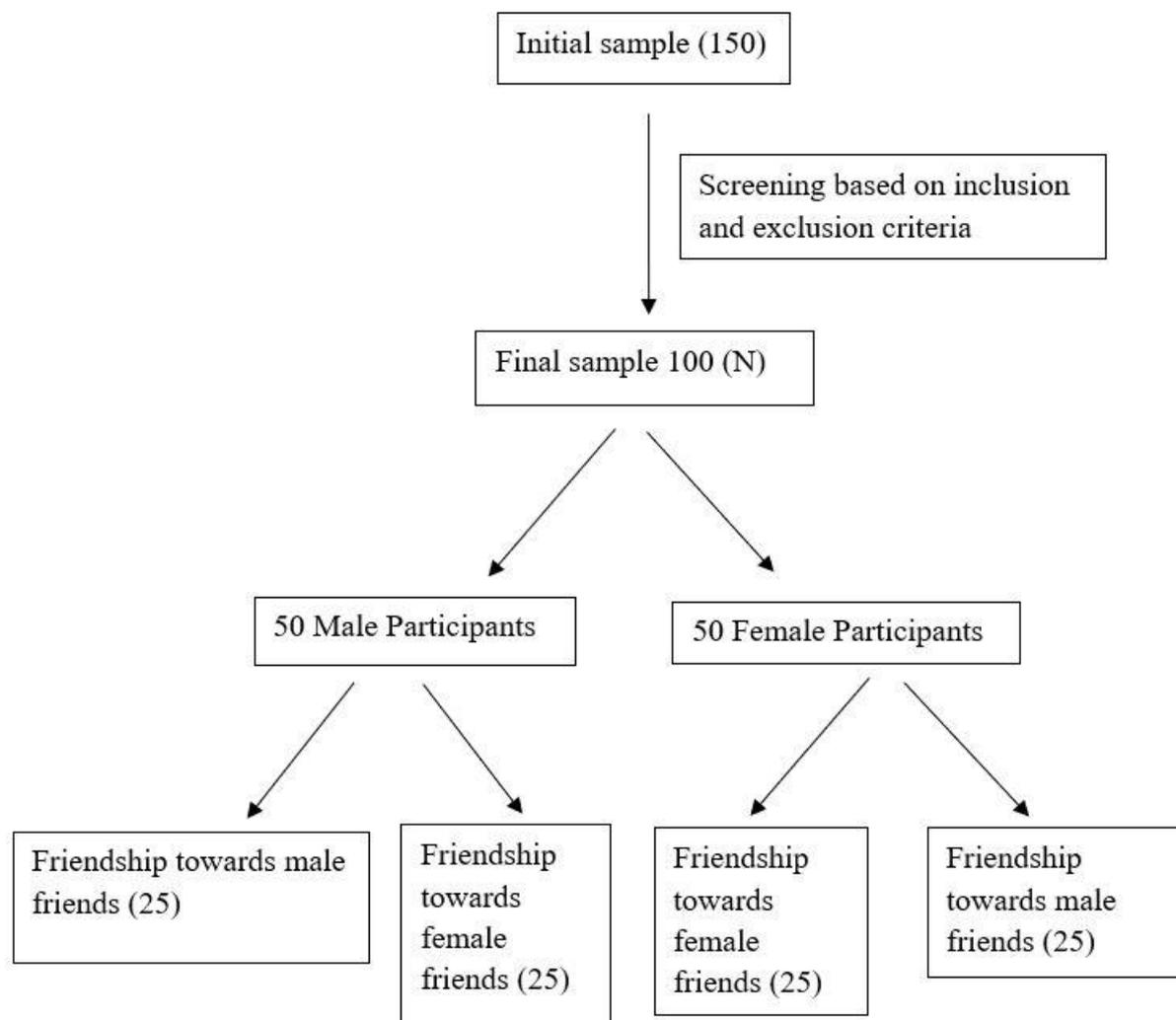
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4. **Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale:** This scale was developed by sociologist Dr. Morris Rosenberg (1965) <sup>[25]</sup> as a self-esteem measure widely used in social-science research. It is a ten-item Likert-type scale with items answered on a four-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Five of the items have positively worded statements and five have negatively worded ones. The scale measures state self-esteem by asking the respondents to reflect on their current feelings. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is considered a reliable and valid quantitative tool for self-esteem assessment.

### *Procedure*

At first, a total of six colleges were selected according to the convenience of the researchers. Then, a written permission was obtained from the principal of the colleges and the students were approached during college hours in classes and were explained the purpose, method of using the questionnaires, and was also ensured the confidentiality of the data. A verbal consent was also obtained from the students, both female and male who wanted to participate in the study through purposive sampling. Only the day scholars were included in the study. Then the required scales were distributed in the classes with required instructions. Along with giving instructions for filling up the required questionnaires, it was instructed to respond to the items only in respect of real-life friendships; participants were instructed not to include their responses towards their solely online based friendships, if present any. Initially, a sample of 150 participants were selected. First, the sociodemographic data sheet was filled up by the participants. Participants having both male and female friendships were included in the study. Participants having only male and female friendships were excluded from the study. Participants having a previous history of psychopathology and substance abuse were excluded from the study. After exclusion of the participants, the questionnaires were distributed to the included 100 participants; of which it was 50 females, 50 males and after completion of the questionnaires, they were scored and interpreted according to the scoring manual. Confidentiality of the data has been maintained. The statistical analysis was done by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0.

50 males and 50 females were selected for the collection of data after following the inclusion and exclusion criteria. While collecting the data from each male and female group, each group (50) were again divided into two groups (25 in each group) where both the male and female participants were asked to rate the test items keeping in mind their friendship both towards male and female friends.



*Fig.1 Schematic representation of the design of the study*

## RESULTS

### *Socio-demographic Characteristics*

One hundred students, 50 females and 50 males participated in the study. The mean age of the females was found to be 21.70 ( $\pm 2.30$ ). 90% of the females were from urban area and 10% from semi urban area. 54% of females were studying in Graduation and 46% were in Post-Graduation. The mean age of the males was found to be 21.86 ( $\pm 2.25$ ). Among the males, 70% were from urban area and 30% from semi urban area. 68% of males were studying in Graduation and 32% were in Post-Graduation.

Table 1 suggests the frequency and percentages of the friendship dimensions (DFS) among the female group. The highest dimension of friendship shown is Trust ( $f=42$ ;  $\%=84$ ), followed by Mutual Assistance ( $f=41$ ;  $\%=82$ ), Enjoyment ( $f=36$ ;  $\%=72$ ) and Spontaneity ( $f=36$ ;  $\%=72$ ). The lowest friendship dimension shown is Confiding ( $f=26$ ;  $\%=52$ ). This table also suggests the frequency and percentages of the friendship dimensions (DFS) among the male group. The highest dimension of friendship shown is Mutual Assistance ( $f=45$ ;  $\%=90$ ), followed by Enjoyment ( $f=42$ ;  $\%=84$ ) and Trust ( $f=35$ ;  $\%=70$ ). The lowest friendship dimension shown is Confiding ( $f=25$ ;  $\%=50$ ).

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**Table 1: Frequency and percentages of the Friendship dimensions among the female and male group**

Dimensions of Friendship	Low (F)		Low (M)		Avrge (F)		Avrge (M)		High (F)		High (M)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Enjoyment	4	8	2	4	10	20	6	12	36	72	42	84
Acceptance	7	14	5	10	15	30	13	26	28	56	32	64
Trust	3	9	0	0	5	10	15	30	42	84	35	70
Respect	8	16	8	16	11	22	10	20	31	62	32	64
Mutual Assistance	0	0	0	0	9	18	5	10	41	82	45	90
Confiding	26	52	25	50	12	24	14	28	12	24	11	22
Understanding	10	20	18	36	19	38	14	28	21	42	18	36
Spontaneity	3	6	4	8	11	22	14	28	36	72	32	64
Total Score	21	42	20	40	24	48	22	44	5	10	8	16

f= frequency; %= percentage

Table 2 reflects chi-square results between dimensions of friendship and gender group. The comparison of scores in all dimensions of friendship and gender group demonstrated that there is significant difference between the dimension of acceptance ( $\chi^2=27.89$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), trust ( $\chi^2=9.75$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), mutual assistance ( $\chi^2=16.81$ ;  $p\leq 0.05$ ) among female and male group. Further findings also suggest significant difference between the dimension of understanding ( $\chi^2=25.68$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and spontaneity among female and male group ( $\chi^2=18.70$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 2: Chi-square results between the Friendship dimensions among the male and female group**

	Females	Males	$\chi^2$	df	p value
<b>Enjoyment</b>					
Low	4	2			
Average	10	6	20.17	12	0.06NS
High	36	42			
<b>Acceptance</b>					
Low	7	5			
Average	15	13	27.89	15	<b>0.02*</b>
High	28	32			
<b>Trust</b>					
Low	3	0			
Average	5	15	22.45	12	<b>0.03*</b>
High	42	35			
<b>Respect</b>					
Low	8	8			
Average	11	10	22.63	18	0.20NS
High	31	32			
<b>Mutual Assistance</b>					
Low	0	0			
Average	9	5	16.81	9	<b>0.05*</b>
High	41	45			
<b>Confiding</b>					
Low	26	25			
Average	12	14	18.08	15	0.25NS
High	12	11			
<b>Understanding</b>					
Low	10	18			
Average	19	14	25.68	15	<b>0.04*</b>
High	21	18			

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	Females	Males	$\chi^2$	df	p value
<b>Spontaneity</b>					
Low	3	4	32.99	18	<b>0.01**</b>
Average	11	14			
High	36	32			
<b>Total Score</b>					
Low	21	20	1.07	2	0.58NS
Average	24	22			
High	5	8			

\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*  $p \leq 0.05$

Table 3a describes Mann Whitney results between dimensions of friendship and the attitude of the female group towards their female and male friends. The comparison showed that the attitude of the female group towards their female friends and male friends has differed in the dimensions of enjoyment ( $Z=2.90$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), acceptance ( $Z=2.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), respect ( $Z=2.29$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), mutual assistance ( $Z=2.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confiding ( $Z=2.41$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ), understanding ( $Z=2.87$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 3a: Mann Whitney results showing difference in dimensions of friendship in female group towards female and male friends**

Friendship (Males)	Males	Females	Z-value	p value
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank		
Enjoyment	31.18	19.82	2.90	0.00**
Acceptance	30.88	20.12	2.70	0.00**
Respect	30.10	20.90	2.29	0.02*
Mutual Assistance	29.72	21.28	2.13	0.03*
Confiding	30.34	20.66	2.41	0.01**
Understanding	31.16	19.84	2.87	0.00**

\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*  $p \leq 0.05$

Table 3b describes Mann Whitney results between dimensions of friendship and the attitude of the male group towards their female and male friends. The comparison showed that the attitude of the male participants towards their male friends and female friends has differed in the dimension of acceptance ( $Z=2.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) only.

**Table 3b: Mann Whitney results showing difference in dimensions of friendship in male group towards male and female friends**

Friendship (Females)	Females	Males	Z-value	p value
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank		
Acceptance	30.68	20.32	2.62	0.00**

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 4 describes the correlation between the dimensions of friendship and self-esteem among the male participants. The table shows that there is a positive correlation between acceptance ( $r=-0.31$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), understanding and self-esteem ( $r=0.29$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). No significant correlation has been found between the dimensions of friendship and self-esteem among the female participants.

**Table 4: Correlation between dimensions of friendship and self-esteem among the male group**

Dimensions of Friendship	Enjoyment	Acceptance	Trust	Respect	Mutual Assistance	Confiding	Understanding	Spontaneity
Self Esteem	-0.01	0.31*	0.00	0.13	0.02	0.19	0.29*	0.14

\*p<0.05

Table 5a suggests the regression analysis (model summary) between the dimensions of friendship and self-esteem among the male participants. This table shows 0.09 of change in Acceptance dimension of friendship gives rise to a change self-esteem leading to an F ratio of 5.22 which is significant at p<0.05. In addition to the new predictor, 0.28 change in Understanding dimension of friendship causes a change in self-esteem which leads to an F ratio of 12.28, significant at p<0.00.

**Table 5a: Summary of Regression model for effect of friendship on self-esteem among the male group**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R Square Change	F Change	Sig F Change
1	0.31 <sup>a</sup>	0.09	0.09	5.22	0.02*
2	0.53 <sup>b</sup>	0.28	0.18	12.28	0.00**

\*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

*Dependent Variable (Constant): Self Esteem*

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Acceptance
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Acceptance, Understanding

Table 5b reflects the regression coefficient of the dimensions of friendship and self-esteem among the male participants. This table describes a positive relationship between the predictor and outcome. It suggests that as Acceptance dimension of friendship increases by 1 unit, self-esteem increases by 0.34 units; therefor for every 1 unit increase in Acceptance, self-esteem increases by 34% when understanding is kept constant. When Understanding dimension of friendship is studied, it is found that increase of 1 unit, self-esteem increases by 0.23 units; hence understanding leads to an added 23% increase in self-esteem, when acceptance is kept constant.

**Table 5b: Summary of Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t-value	Sig
	B	Standard Error			
(Constant)	3.85	0.68		5.68	0.00**
Acceptance	0.22	0.99	-0.31	2.28	0.02*
(Constant)	3.30	0.63		5.19	0.00**
Acceptance	0.34	0.09	-0.48	3.63	0.00**
Understanding	0.23	0.06	0.46	3.50	0.01**

- a. Dependent Variable (Constant): Self Esteem
- b. \*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05

## DISCUSSION

The friendship always tends to have a greater impact on shaping the behavior of a person along with addressing the satisfaction and frustration of a person's basic human needs. Therefore, the present study intends to assess the friendship pattern among college students in an urban location.

The procedure of purposive sampling has been used for selecting the sample which guarantees those individuals to be included in the sample that are relevant for this research. This sampling method gave the opportunity to gather information from six different colleges in Kolkata.

In this study, in respect to the friendship dimensions in the female group it was found that the highest dimension of friendship shown is Trust (Table 1). About 84% females were found showing higher score in trust, followed by 82% of females showing mutual assistance and 72% of females showing enjoyment and spontaneity in their friendship. The results suggest that an essential to female friendship is having a sense of trust for knowing who is really going to be there for them when times get tough which is present among females often from the start. It also reflects that friendships among females offer high mutual support to one another in all times of thick and thin, especially when it's needed most. Further the results suggest that the female friends enjoy among themselves and are spontaneous while spending time with one another which in turn makes them happier, psychologically too. This finding is supported in previous studies [26,27]. The lowest friendship dimension Confiding, is shown among the 52% of females. This finding can be explained that in spite of having a close and trusty friendships among the females, when it comes in terms of confiding their own deepest feeling, fears, emotions, pain, happiness, secrets, wishes, they prefer to keep it to themselves rather than sharing them with their friends. This is in consistent with the findings of a previous study [26].

With respect to the friendship dimensions in the male group it was found that the highest dimension of friendship shown is Mutual Assistance (Table 1). About 90% males were found showing higher score in mutual assistance, followed by 84% of males showing high enjoyment score and 70% of males showing higher score in trust. The results suggest that friendships among males are mostly "no-boundaries" behaviours where it is easier to overcome conflicts. As a result of which they offer high mutual support to one another in their difficult times which makes them to enjoy among themselves while spending happy times together. Further, the results suggest that male friendship has also a feeling of trust for knowing who is there with them in their tough times. This finding is supported in previous studies [26,27]. The lowest friendship dimension shown is Confiding among 50% of males. It suggests that a lot of men don't necessarily want friendships where they have to open up emotionally and they tend to be in general less physically and emotionally expressive, but it does not mean that their friendships are not incredibly important to them. Previous study supports this finding [26].

On studying the differences among the different dimensions of friendships between female and male groups, on the dimensions of acceptance, trust, mutual assistance, understanding and spontaneity, significant differences has been found (Table 2). Females were found to show more trust, mutual assistance, understanding and spontaneity towards their friends. It suggests that females tend to maintain their friendships through intimacy, trust, communication, support. Females tend to trust their friends and really get on a personal level with spontaneity, are more accepting, understanding and helping when needed by their

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friends whereas males tend to avoid those intimate conversations and mostly prefers side-to-side communication. This finding is in line with the findings of previous studies [26,27,28]. Males were found to show more acceptance towards their friends suggesting that males become friends and accept them more easily out of their need to prove their masculinity and integrity. This finding is contrary to other previous findings [26,29].

On probing into the data on difference between the dimensions of friendship of female participants towards their female and male friends, it has been found that there is a significant difference in the dimensions of enjoyment, acceptance, respect, mutual assistance, confiding, understanding (Table 3a). Females are found to have a stronger emotional attachment towards their female friends where they tend to reveal more things, share secrets, accept them as an integral part of their life and really get on a personal level, while with male friends they tend to avoid those heart-to-heart talks and instead bond on a significantly decreased magnitude. Females usually long for their female friends who can understand each other's feelings and bond with them emotionally. Females view their friendship with their female friends as personal and intense unlike with males. This difference is heavily influenced by gender differences that society has established for us and may be that male peer group culture poses obstacles in the development of close friendships because males feel "the need to protect their vulnerability, prove their masculinity, and preserve their integrity among their peers [29]. Females having same sex dyadic friendships tend to be more exclusive than those of boys [30]. Females tend to have a more intense relationship towards their female friends than their male friends [26,28].

Looking closely at the results of the difference between the dimensions of friendship towards their female and male friends in male group, it has been found that there is a significant difference in the dimensions of acceptance (Table 3b). Previous study reported that compared to females, males tend to have a more open network that is less intimate, more volatile, less trustworthy towards the female group and more likely to include new friends over time [31]. The traditional view of masculinity, gender differences in the society make males to keep a distance regarding how to make and maintain friendship with females and trusting them. As per a study, males and females seem to enter friendships with different social needs because of gender-role expectations, then their friendship nurtures in different ways; females towards communal concerns, and males towards achievement and status concerns [9,10].

On predicting, if the dimensions of friendship and self-esteem are correlated on each other among male group, it has been found that there has been a positive relationship between acceptance and understanding dimension of friendship and self-esteem (Table 4,5,6a.6b). On analysing more into the predictors, it has been found that both acceptance and understanding play an important role in self-esteem. Self-esteem is a large part of self-understanding and is likely to be a fluctuating and dynamic construct, susceptible to internal and external influences throughout life [32]. Self-esteem is widely recognized as a central aspect of psychological functioning from adolescence. Friendships has a direct effect on the self-esteem of a person. Friendships based on acceptance, understanding, respect where competition is low, support is high, interactions are positive more than negative and always create a high self-esteem among male group. Friendships are an important part of everyone's life, have important implications for male group. Self-esteem is found to be contingent on the quality of one's friendships and poor quality of friendship can be detrimental to mental health among male participants. Previous research shows self-esteem is dependent on a domain(s) of friendship [33]. When self-esteem is contingent on a specific domain of

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friendship, experiencing positive and negative events in friendship leads to fluctuations in self-esteem<sup>[34]</sup>. Among male group, self-esteem is often perceived as a stereotypical male feature where they are more likely to be in situations that encourage competition, conflict, power, excitement tending them to develop emotions related to externalizing them where higher self-esteem is reported to be dependent on friendship<sup>[35]</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

Friendships are an essential component of development, in all stages of life, providing a security blanket where individuals feel safe to talk about very intimate and personal dilemmas offering emotional support and social cohesion. This study on friendship suggests prominent differences between females and males. Females and males scored almost similar all the dimensions of friendship; thus, it can be concluded that both females and males possess more intense, intimate and close friendship. However, females are more likely than the males to establish intimacy through discussion self-disclosure while, males are more likely to establish friendship and intimacy through shared activities. Females were more understanding, trustworthy and spontaneous towards their friendship as well as they were found slightly better in maintaining their friendship with their friends. Friendship has also been found to have a relationship with self-esteem with respect to gender too. The limitations of this study are; sample size has been kept small, the study focused only on urban area and on college students, the study didn't take into account the other factors related to friendship like social support, attachment styles, well-being, any type of mental health condition developed due to disturbance in friendship, the study also didn't include online friendships and effect of social media on friendships in today's digital world. This study highlights the need for more researches on friendship patterns focusing on different age groups and between urban-rural settings. This study also focuses on the need to explore the friendship in different types of social medium in current age of digitalization and what effect it has on friendship in today's world. Friendship is said to be a form of interpersonal bond, essential aspect of relationship building skills and is a strong social support which improves prospects for a good mental health. Disturbances in friendship, lack of social support often leads to loneliness and other psychological conditions. Thus, knowing the peer relations, friendship pattern of males and females coming for psychotherapy can be helpful and useful in the therapeutic sessions, especially if interpersonal relationships act as a stressor for the development of psychological conditions. Overall, friendship tends to have a greater impact in every person's life, however even the closest of friendships can hit the rocky road but putting in the time and effort helps in keeping the bond strong and tight and eventually helps to solidify a strong and lifelong foundation for years to come in future.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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